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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NIAMEY 000653

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SUBJECT: Niger: Travel Ban for Ex-Parliamentarians; Updates on the
Legislative and Municipal Elections

Ref: a) Niamey 646 b) Niamey 640 c) Niamey 625
d) Niamey 609 e) Niamey 584

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11. Summary: The Government of Niger (GON) banned foreign travel for
former National Assembly members. On September 9, the Ministry of
Interior closed the reception of candidacies for the October 20
legislative elections. On September 10, President Tandja announced
the local elections for December 27. End summary.

GON Imposes Travel Restrictions on Ex-Parliamentarians

12. Following the arrest and court cases against former National
Assembly members (refs a and b), GON authorities forbade 124
ex-deputies from leaving the country for an unspecified period.
While the GON has not publicly announced the ban or notified it to
the incumbent, GON Minister of Justice Garba Lompo told an
international radio that "Currently, they are under a judicial
procedure. There are over one hundred of them who are prosecuted.
They will appear before the judge; therefore, for the time being,
they cannot travel outside the country. Also, a certain number of
former deputies have already been charged. They are under judiciary
supervision; therefore, if they should travel, they have the right
to make a request, and it is up to the judge to determine. But I
believe that the judge has told them to remain at his disposal, for
the time being."

13. As a consequence of the travel ban, authorities told Ms. Fatouma
Zara Zeine, a member of the dissolved National Assembly, to refrain
from traveling to the United States. Ms. Zeine, selected as the
primary candidate for an International Visitor Leadership Program
(IVLP) on "Women as Political Leaders" was to depart Niamey on
September 4 for the program that began the first week of September.

14. In another case, on September 10, police at Niamey Airport denied
former Deputy Mahamadou Issoufou access to his flight to Cotonou,
Benin. (Note: Issoufou is Niger's opposition leader, president of
the Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism (PNDS), former Prime
Minister (1993-1995), and former President of the National Assembly
(1995-1996). End note.) The police showed Issoufou a list of 124
people whom they stated they had been instructed to prevent from
leaving the country. When Issoufou asked if they had written
instructions, the police said they had only "verbal instructions."
When he asked them to put what they said in writing and sign, they
did not do so. Subsequently, Issoufou received a summons requesting
him to appear before the judge on September 14 in line with the

former National Assembly audit. In the end, he cancelled his travel plans and, in a radio interview, criticized "Tandja's spiteful and dogged attitude toward those who oppose his plans... but this will fire back on him."

15. Some legal practitioners claimed that the travel ban against former Deputies should be carried out only if warrant for arrest has been issued against them, or based on a final court decision. According to them, these requirements have not been fulfilled.

Legislative Election Candidacy Submissions Closed; Local Elections
Called for December 27

16. September 9 was the deadline for the submission of lists for the legislative elections scheduled for October 20 (Ref d). Twenty-eight parties including a portion of the National Movement for a Society of Development (MNSD), the main party of the ruling coalition, 24 smaller parties that supported President's Tandja's continuation plan, and three small opposition parties have submitted their lists in fifty-three constituencies. Twenty-eight independent candidates will also run for National Assembly seats. Twenty opposition parties that counted 67 out of 113 members in the dissolved National Assembly will not participate in the elections (Refs c and e). Opposition leader Issoufou said, "To participate in these elections would be to legitimize [Tandja's] coup d'etat, completed by the referendum of August 4. The upcoming elections will be held under the new constitution. We decided that we did not have to participate, and our position is clear; it is reinstatement of the August 9, 1999 constitution."

17. On September 10, President Tandja announced that the local, municipal elections would be held on December 27. The campaign for

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these elections will open on December 16 and close on December 25.

ECOWAS Parliament

18. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Parliament, during its ordinary session for the period September 7-22 in Abuja, Nigeria, drafted on September 9 a resolution regarding the political situation in Niger. The resolution condemns the persecutions, harassment and intimidation against Niger's Deputies and other political actors, and requested their immediate release and protection.

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